

**Notes toward a Report on the 5th Document Excavation of the DATA-ist Society of NWC, Fall 2111
by Sjón**

1.

When the storm let up, as suddenly as it had begun, it had pounded the great city with rain for twohundredthirty nights and twohundredthirty days.

2.

We sat tight until afternoon and then ventured up out of the train tunnels that had been our base camp while the storm passed over. We split up and set off into the daylight in four three-man search parties, each of which would study one quadrant of the city.

3.

On first inspection, the damage to the city was merely as expected: all loose objects had blown into the sea or collected in heaps in smaller plazas and in alleyways. All storefront and advertizing signs had fallen and broken and their images had peeled off entirely, except in isolated places where colorful patches remained in the glue.

4.

It was on the fifth day that we comprehended the extent of the destruction. In addition to the damage mentioned above, the windows of every last building had shattered and the wind had scoured all loose objects out of their rooms and lodgings. There appeared to be no pictorial specimens left of the life that had been lived there or that the inhabitants had fantasized about living. The same applied for written material and lettering that might have offered clues to the local culture; everything had fallen prey to water and wind.

5.

The only visual relics that the search parties found were faint evidence of graffiti in out-of-the-way places. Only then did we grasp the world-historical significance residing in what remained in the way of billboards in the subway station where we had stayed during the preceding months; the little that had not moldered in the overwhelming humidity down there had served us as toilet paper. In other stations, the damage was total.

6.

What remained of the platform and tunnel billboards of the '23rd Street Station':

a) Left half, nail polish advertisement. Off-red fingernail, 96 cm x 78 cm at the widest point; initial letter of the trademark Dior, a gold-colored 'D'.

b) The letters 'E' and 'A', formed in French fries on a red background.

c) The upper portion of a life-sized movie billboard: a strip of night sky, below which the beginning of the movie title is visible, being the letters "TH" in neon-green handwriting.

d), e), f), g), h), i), j), k), l), m), n), o), p), q), r), s), t), u), v), w): distinguishable fragments of text and image, so small and scattered that further analysis is required.

7.

One group promptly took on the task of conserving the billboard remnants.

8.

The expedition's largest discovery to date is a building on the east side of the city. From a distance it appeared to be a 'neo-brutalist' monstrosity, 53 stories tall and equilateral (223 m x 223 m x 223 m), but on approach we saw that what had appeared to us to be windows and doors were faults in the building material where black-glazed steel frames had previously been inserted into the material in order to obscure the true nature of the structure. The extreme weather had worked its way under the framework on all sides of the building and loosened the fastenings, prying the steel and glass from the exterior until in the end the frames gave way and tumbled in variously-sized units down to the street on the south, east, and west sides. Upon this falling away of its outer shell, the building was revealed to be utterly unlike other city buildings: it is one gigantic, solid, windowless, doorless clump.

9.

The building material is 80 gsm U.S. letter-sized paper, i.e. 215.9 mm in width x 279.4 mm in height. The pages are ordered in 1000-sheet stacks/blocks, which are then laid in a conventional manner, lengthwise, like bricks, thus forming the 223 m wall-width, and we have no reason to believe otherwise than that the "pile of papers" (as we call the building amongst ourselves) reaches its 223 m height as a solid and continuous whole.

10.

The next step was to dig our way into "the pile." This led to the discovery that every page in the 1000-sheet building blocks contained information. These are photocopied documents, data on the discrete concerns of the vanished citizenry, issued by public and private entities, pertaining to both private life (tax notices, phone bills, etc.) and collective concerns (minutes from the meetings of municipal bodies, statements from political parties, corporate annual reports, etc.).

11.

To date we have found black-and-white photocopies only, with no visual imagery other than the letterheads of the corporations or institutions from which the documents originated.

12.

80 gsm paper has an approximate thickness of 0.1 mm. Thus in a single pile of papers extending from the street to the uppermost edge of the building there are 2,230,000 pages. We immediately called out all DATA-ist Society reserve units with any experience in conservation.

13.

The work is proceeding well. We are making the utmost effort to retrieve each photocopy intact. In the two months that have passed since our discovery we have excavated a 2.8 m x 1.9 m x 1.3 m "cave" into the structure.

A meditation on the work of Gardar Eide Einarsson, commissioned by Gunnar B. Kvaran for the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art (Dronningensgt. 4, Oslo, Norway. Letters: P.O. Box 1158, 0107, Oslo, Norway. Tel: +47 22936060 / Fax: +47 22936065 / E-mail: info@fearnleys.no), composed by Sjón between 24 June 2009 and 3 March 2010.